1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
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Kurtatchi

524 857 along the ground. More children then join in, each sitting on the feet of the one behind. There seem to be no words to this game, and the name of it has no meaning.

The native version of 'Ring-a-ring o' roses' is played to the formula '*a goro pio ma ētʃē ia si gin, ia si gin*', which is also meaningless.

524 857 177 Another game is said to belong properly to the island of Nissan. When I saw it, on the beach at Tabut, the children made a little mound of sand and sat round it in a circle, holding in their hands bits of stick ornamented with flowers and leaves tied on to them. Chanting, slowly and somewhat mournfully, the syllables '*Sororōwi, sororōwi, rōwi, rōwi*'—which they could not explain—they passed the sticks from hand to hand. A man standing by told me that at Nissan it is played by older people, and that the man 'makes magic' over the stick before handing it to the girl of his choice; this makes her desire him and afterwards they go off and have sexual connexion together. As I saw it, it appeared to be merely a game, and the children were quite little.

SEXUAL PLAY AND SEX KNOWLEDGE OF CHILDREN

● 864 On the whole, it seemed to me that there was comparatively little sexual interest in their games and behaviour to each other. The segregation of the boys wearing the upi may perhaps have some bearing on this. I have seen imitations of the act of coitus performed by children; they were done quite openly, but amounted to no more than taking up the appropriate position. On one occasion this was done by two boys, aged perhaps about ten, both wearing the *upi*. They laughed heartily all the while, and volunteered to me the explanation of what they were doing. The point of it, to them, seemed to lie in mimicking their elders. Some younger children once told me, in the course of general chatter, that they had been copulating in the bush; these included both boys and girls, but as all were obviously much below the age of puberty such sexual play as may have taken place between them must have been purely imitative, and possibly they were only romancing.

Small children who finger their own genitals or those of their companions are always promptly reproved by an older child or an adult. Sometimes a boy will pretend to cut off a smaller boy's penis with a knife or a sharp shell.

Children, as often as adults, of both sexes, told myths and stories

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in which sexual incidents took a prominent place. The telling of even the most outspoken of these by small boys or girls gave rise to no comments from the audience, nor was it ever made the subject of a jest. 864

I do not think that any set and definite teaching on sexual matters is given to these children. It certainly is not part of the ritual attaching to the seclusion prior to puberty rites either of boys or girls. This was clearly stated by all with whom I discussed the subject, and it is obvious that long before the children reach the age to undergo these ceremonies they have already acquired a very considerable amount of knowledge, indeed it would be difficult for them to remain in ignorance, since sex forms such a commonplace of everyday life that the most intimate details can be learned in the natural course of things by listening to conversations, observing people's behaviour, watching animals, &c. There is no lack of directness in answering any questions a child may happen to put on the subject, and no suggestion that such matters should not be thought of or talked about. They recognize that sexual practices are hedged about with taboos that should not be, but often are, broken, but so likewise is almost every other activity with which they are familiar—such, for example, as eating or conversing, and, so far as my observations enable me to judge, all these aspects of life are taken for granted in much the same way.

MEDICINE AND MAGIC PERTAINING TO CHILDREN

Small children will frequently be seen wearing round their necks, waists, or arms, strings of leaves, usually of some plant having aromatic properties. Certain plants are known as *nibnib pi bai'i*, flowers for children. These are liked partly because they smell nice, but most of them are also thought to assist the child's growth. The bones of a freshwater fish (*kakau*) caught by hand by men in streams in the bush are hung round the child's neck for the same reason, and hanging from a bit of fibre round its waist will often be seen a hollow tube which appears to be the dried nest of some bush insect. It is called *titi u rē* and was described to me as 'the house of a little snake'. 789 856 824 825

There are a number of prescriptions in my collection intended to be used for children who do not thrive. Most of them consist of the leaves or stems of various plants rubbed or pulped and mixed with water, which is then given to the child to drink. Rather more 789 824 856